1995

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Much has been written on the subject of genius and neurosis,[1] and psychobiographies of the artistic personality are numerous;[2] however, literature on the artist as criminal is scarce. In real life, there are probably no artists who murder for their art or whose art is murder. In literature, such figures are also relatively rare. There are, however, several fictional artists with psychopathic disorders that cause them to murder. E.T.A. Hoffmann's Cardillac in *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* is a goldsmith in seventeenth-century Paris who kills the recipients of the jewelry he creates. Loder in "The Abominable History of the Man with Copper Fingers" by Dorothy Sayers is a sculptor who bronzes his mistress and incorporates the statue into the settee in his living room. Grenouille in Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*, who has learned the art of perfume-making (maceration and enfleurage), extracting essential oils from flowers to distill their fragrance, transposes this art to the human realm, murdering two dozen nubile young women to extract the virginal essence of their smell in order to make others love him and exalt him above God. Jame Gumb, a serial killer like Cardillac and Grenouille, artfully skins the women he murders in *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris. Ernesto Sábato's Juan Pablo Castel is a painter, whose first-person narrative in *The Tunnel* relates how he came to kill Mariá, his mistress and the only person to understand him.

Cardillac's seventeenth-century explanation for his affliction is based on superstition, a terrifying prenatal experience that caused his passion for jewelry and its association with death. Modern psychology, however, would attribute it to a form of narcissism. There is little to go on in an analysis of Loder. His motivation seems to be extreme jealousy and possessiveness. Both Grenouille and Juan Pablo Castel clearly suffer from an inability to integrate the male and female aspects of their personality, as does Jame Gumb, who wants to be a woman.

These characters hardly conform to the ideal of the artist as prophet and priest, the messianic mediator with a definite function and place in society. Ever since

the advent of modernity, especially in the writings of Thomas Mann, the artist in literature has become more and more suspect, increasingly a social deviant. This coincides with the advent of psychology and the probing of the dark side of human nature (which has its roots in German Romanticism with the writings of Schubert, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Kleist, and Tieck, for example). Rather than divinely inspired, the criminal artists are driven by forces of evil originating in the depths of the human psyche. Their efforts to artistically possess aspects of an individuality beyond the immediate conscious self results in a failed attempt at maturation.

The Argentine writer Ernesto Sábato, who created one of the criminal artists discussed here, remarks in a collection of essays on the relationship of art and society that Romanticism (by contrast with the Enlightenment) accepted evil "as an unavoidable and positive manifestation of concrete being" (*The Writer in the Catastrophe of Our Time* 134) and considers the task of the modern novel to be the study of evil: "Real man has existed since the fall. Without the Devil he does not exist. God is not enough" (145). The positive manifestation of evil as a result of the fall from innocence in the Garden of Eden was a new awareness on the part of Adam and Eve. Differentiation went hand in hand with a new level of consciousness. Thus, the biblical myth describes the individuation process: the separation from the original source of creation, the fall into time and space and consciousness of the self. When God created Eve from Adam, the original primal unity of male-female became split into male *and* female. After the fall, Adam and Eve looked at each other and saw that they were naked. They became aware of themselves. Succumbing to the temptation of the snake, associated with evil, and eating from the tree of knowledge, they attained a higher consciousness that brought with it separation from Paradise, where they had existed naively. Paradise represents the cosmic relationship of the human being, the oneness with eternity lost that becomes the object of ideality. In his *Marionettentheater*, the German Romantic Heinrich von Kleist develops a triadic scheme for this process in which the human being, located between inanimate existence that has no consciousness at all and infinite consciousness represented by God, would have to strive to regain entrance to Paradise by eating once more of the apple from the tree of knowledge.

Such a metaphysical interpretation of Sábato's view of evil does not preclude the connection of metaphysics with the human psyche. Until the advent of modern psychology, the care of the soul used to be the domain of pastors or priests. The artist, originally creator in *imitatio dei*, takes on the function of mediating the divine in Early German Romanticism, revealing the infinite beyond finite appearances. The modern artist, however, starting with Late Romanticism, has become increasingly destructive. Unlike Goethe's ultimate illusionist Mephisto, whose spirit of negation serves progress and, in spite of evil intentions, the good of humankind, recent fictional artists destroy human beings for the sake of their

objectification in art rather than destroying the illusion of art for the sake of life, as happens in Romanticism. There is a reversal of artistic intention: a subversion of Romantic irony, in which form was destroyed for the sake of life.

The artists in the mysteries discussed here are sinister because of their obsessions, in each case connected with their relationships with women or the feminine. Loder and Castel kill because of monstrous jealousy. Cardillac is doomed to associate gold with death and must murder as the result of a prenatal memory. Grenouille, like Jame Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs*, eliminates young women in order to obtain an ideal of beauty.

The narrator in E.T.A. Hoffmann's nineteenth-century story explains Cardillac's criminality on the basis of superstition: When the goldsmith's mother was pregnant with Cardillac, she attended a ball in the Trianon at Versailles, where she was attracted by a necklace of sparkling jewels around the neck of a gentleman in Spanish dress. This man, who had pursued Cardillac's mother some years before and had been rejected, now appeared like a being from a higher world because of the splendor of the diamonds and seemed to be the epitome of beauty. Encouraged by the wistful gazes of the mother, this man enticed her away from court to a secluded place, intending to seduce her. When he embraced her, Cardillac's mother reached for the necklace, and at that moment, he died (perhaps of a stroke) and fell, taking the woman down with him. She struggled in vain to extricate herself from his embrace and had to be freed by passersby who heard her screams. To this prenatal event Cardillac attributes the "evil star" that dominates his life: the passion for jewels and the association of jewelry with death. As a child, he used to steal gold and jewels, reaping chastisement from his father. In order to get his hands on gold and silver honorably, he chose to become a goldsmith, but whenever he had completed a commissioned piece of jewelry, he was compelled by an inner voice to steal it back, and hatred for the recipient of his creation caused him to kill.

Cardillac's obsession with his art has been interpreted in a psychoanalytic study by Peter Schneider ("Verbrechen, Künstlertum und Wahnsinn") on the basis of a theory of narcissism. He attributes Cardillac's crimes to his artistry and a Romantic aesthetic in which the sense of beauty superseded the sense of morality (46). The jewels in E.T.A. Hoffman's story represent a sublime beauty, however deceptive and illusory, as is evident in the seduction scene with the mother, where the wearer of the jewels suddenly seems like a being of a higher order. The beauty of his jewels makes him attractive to her, so that she succumbs to his embrace. The sublime illusion of the mother, however, becomes demoniac reality for Cardillac. His attraction to the gold, cathected with narcissistic libido (47), becomes his "evil star" in that he cannot separate himself from his creation. The perfection of the jewelry he has created always falls short of the perfection he imagines, so that he has to hold on to it or reclaim it by murder and thievery. Fixated in his psychological development by the memory of his mother's trauma,

he wants to prevent further seduction of women with his jewels (34). To preserve their honor and, ironically, his own integrity (i.e., identity with his art that includes bourgeois respectability), he cannot part with his creations. His own ideal image connected with them is destroyed when he is compelled to murder to reclaim them, symbolically vanquishing the seducer of his mother.

A skilled craftsman or artisan like Cardillac, Jame Gumb (alias Buffalo Bill) skins the young women he murders, in order to tailor their skins to fit his own figure in an attempt to be the female he admires, specifically his own mother. She was for him the epitome of beauty that he tries to emulate and wants to become by slipping into their skins. Inside the throat of one of the victims, just behind the soft palate, investigators in the novel find a cylindrical object, the cocoon of an exotic tropical insect, identified as *Erebus odora*, the Black Witch Moth (105). Unlike the harmless butterfly, whose larvae go through similar stages of transformation in its development, the moth is characterized by its destructiveness and in the novel becomes a symbol for death. According to an old definition, the moth was "anything that gradually, silently eats, consumes, or wastes any other thing" (106). The image subverts the notion of transformation on a psychological level.

According to the Jungian point of view, an individual comes to terms with himself or herself only by accomplishing an inner marriage of the polarities within the personality, symbolized by male and female in the *hieros aamos*, the inner marriage (Singer 323) that leads to the evolution of the complete human being. If this process fails, a person "will be looking for another person who will fill out the inner empty places. This must make the individual the victim of his emotional dependence" (323). In order to deny this need and to become autonomous, Jame Gumb destroys the female (symbol for the mother) and tries to take her place by becoming the woman. Identity for him (like beauty) is only skin-deep. Speaking to his mirror (reminiscent of the fairy-tale motif: "Mirror, mirror on the wall, Who is the fairest of them all?"), he used the upper range of his naturally deep voice to request the reflection of a female image: "Do something for me, honey. Do something for me SOON" (136). He had been taking hormones that had thinned the hair across his chest and developed "slightly budding breasts" (136). With electrolysis he had removed his beard, "but he still did not look like a woman. He looked like a man inclined to fight with his nails as well as his fists and feet" (136). Instead of internalizing the feminine within his own personality, as ordinarily happens for the male in the process of maturation, Jame Gumb seeks external evidence of his femininity and tries to transform himself by chemical means (Premarin and diethylstilbestrol). His identity, furthermore, depends on the skins he gathers from the women he kills. Dr. Hannibal Lecter, the incarcerated psychiatrist in the novel, presents a psychological profile of Jame Gumb through the recollections of Jame's lover Raspail, who once was Lecter's patient and confided on his couch that when Jame was twelve he had killed his

grandparents. Jame was not really gay, "it's just something he picked up in jail. He's not anything, really, just a sort of total lack that he wants to fill, and so angry" (172).

While the cocoon of the Black Witch Moth with the design of the human skull on its back is the symbol for failed transformation in the case of Jame Gumb, it is the alembic in Patrick Süskind's *Perfume* that becomes the object of identification and subverted transformation for Grenouille, the perfume-maker. He considers it a "cunning apparatus to snatch the scented soul from matter" (96). Staring at it, "he imagined that he himself was such an alembic . . . flooding the whole world with a distillate of his own making" (97). The process of distillation becomes a daydream for him, implicitly equated with an alchemical process that uses fire, water, and steam to derive the oil of the flower, "the heavily scented principle of the plant" (95). The need to fill the world with a fragrance of his own making is a compensatory mechanism for Grenouille, who was born in 1738 into an age of stench without any discernible smell of his own. This lack of smell is considered inhuman and associated with the devil by those who care for him in infancy. Having no smell of his own, Grenouille envies the odor of others. The German equivalent of "he could not . . . smell himself" (134) really means that he could not "stand" himself: "Er konnte sich . . . nicht dechen" (*Das Parfüm* 171) and implies self-hatred as a result of a problem with his identity. Although he has no scent of his own, he is an olfactory *idiot savant* from birth, his baby nostrils flaring with atavistic genius (*Perfume* 17). He murders innocent young women in order to obtain their scent, dispensing with their bodies the same way the distillation process in perfume-making disposed of the material aspect of the flowers. The perfume gained he considers the *essence absolue*, imagining that it will gain him love and adoration by the world. However, when it does exactly that in an orgiastic scene toward the end of the novel, he cannot tolerate it. His problem with love stems from his childhood. The narrator indicates that his birth cry was not for sympathy and love; rather it was "*against love*" (21). Born of a murderess who tried to kill him at birth and raised by an abused widow who was unfeeling, he grew into a monster (22), an abomination (3, 21). He knew no father and was apprenticed to a brutal tanner who "was capable of thrashing him to death for the least infraction" (31). Without appropriate male and female models in his life, he could not become a whole person and lacked psychological integration. Unable to relate to others, he turns into a psychopathic killer, able to "know" a woman only after he has murdered her, raping the corpse with his nose. But though he fills himself with the scent of his victim, as happens with the red-haired girl in the Rue de Marais (42-43), he cannot internalize the female. Michael Hulse comments that he engages in *enfleurage*, rather than *défleurage* (256), misapplying the process of perfume-making to the human realm and killing two dozen virgins to create a perfume that would satisfy his megalomaniacal desire to be loved more than God. Grenouille is a caricature of

the Romantic idealist who seeks ultimate beauty in the *essence absolue*, though as an apprentice and journeyman, he is rooted in bourgeois existence, like Cardillac, the master jeweler.

Like the goldsmith in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, Loder in "The Abominable History of the Man with Copper Fingers" likes to work with precious metals. He was a man of wealth who created "chryselephantine" (3) sculptures. In addition to many works in bronze, he cast statues in silver, like the nymph for which his mistress Maria Morano, a former cabaret dancer, used to sit for him. The narrator, Varden, is an actor who became known to Loder when starring in the film *Apollo Comes to New York*, in which a statue comes to life. Loder's intentions are to turn the actor into a statue as revenge for eliciting confidences from Maria in conversation with her. Very possessive of her and out of jealousy, Loder Sheffield-plates Maria, turning her into a great silver nude that forms the seat of the couch in the smoking-room of his magnificent house outside New York. The figure was "fully life-size, lying with her head back and her arms extended along the sides of the couch" (7). Since Loder never created an imperfect work of art, the clue that the figure is actually Maria is the fact that the second toe of the left foot of the statue, like that of his mistress, is shorter than the big toe—something that ordinarily Loder would have corrected. Observing Loder sprawling over the figure on the settee by the fireplace, Varden sensed that he "seemed very much attached to it" (7). What he did not know was that Loder was considering making a companion piece to it, something like *The Sleeping Athlete* (13), for which he intended to use his visitor, Varden. By accident, however, he electroplates himself, tripping over a coil of wire into the vat prepared for his guest, thus becoming the complement to Maria in a process that turns life into art, the human being into an object.

This reification is a reversal of the function of art as perceived in classical aesthetics. Whereas the *objet d'art* used to represent a spiritual reality and contemplation of the work of art led to greater perfection in the mind and perception of the artist and thus to greater perfection in successive representations, art as murder deprives the subject of *pneuma* or soul. Instead of delimiting the object to release life, life is destroyed for the sake of art. While murdering Maria results in Loder's only imperfect work of art, Jame Gumb and Grenouille seek a kind of perfection through their murders. The perfume for Grenouille is the thing that represents beauty at the expense of the life of the women from whom he extracts it. It is the reification of an ideal, however evanescent, in the scent of *l'essence absolue*. Jame Gumb considers women as "material" (Harris 205, 206) for his ideal of beauty. In a perversion of the maxim "clothes make the (wo)man," he obtains the skins from the women he kills in order to become a woman himself by fashioning their skin to his contours. Cardillac, too, murders for an aesthetic ideal represented by the jewelry he creates. In each case, this ideal is connected with women, as it was for the Romantics. Instead of androgynous wholeness,

however, the relationship of these protagonists with women results in their death, except for the case of Cardillac, who murders men in order to protect women from their advances.

For Grenouille, the golden-hued perfume is the reification of an idea: the absolute essence as concept of love. One of the perfumes he detests is the scent of Amor and Psyche made by his competitor in the industry. He improves on it to make his employer rich, reducing its significance to a materialistic level. The myth of Amor and Psyche, however, as interpreted by Erich Neumann and Ann Belford Ulanov from a Jungian perspective, is the myth of individuation and sheds light on the transformation processes of the human soul. It relates the story of androgyny, the reconciliation of male and female elements in the psychic structure of the individual that can be accomplished only through relationships with the opposite sex that are internalized in the maturation process. All these fictional artists and artisans (except for Cardillac) destroy women and, thus, the feminine aspects of their personality, which renders them unable to integrate the self and incapable of relationship.

Juan Pablo Castel, in Ernesto Sábato's novel *The Tunnel*, identifies himself in the opening lines of the first chapter as "the painter who killed María Iribarne" (1), the only person who might have understood him and his work. He confesses to "not being able to communicate with a woman" (8) and feels that he "was condemned never to be part of any woman's life" (9). This lack of connection is expressed in a "window" of his painting entitled "Motherhood," where a solitary woman on an empty beach looks out toward the sea. In Castel's mind, this scene in the upper left-hand corner of his canvas "suggested the most wistful and absolute loneliness" (6). María captured his attention because she was the only person who noticed the scene, becoming totally absorbed in it. Like the woman in the window, "she was totally isolated from the world" (7) while looking at it. Because of her apparent identification with this woman, who represents the lonely, disconnected feminine aspect of himself, he becomes obsessed with María. The scene on the beach is charged with fear for Castel, though he cannot consciously express it. María divines that the scene holds "future memories" (54) and eventually becomes the woman by the sea, "waiting on the lonely beach" (55), where in her mind's eye he suddenly stands between her and the sea, looking at her as if "asking for help" (55). Castel feels that he needs María because through the scene in his painting, she relates to him and seems to understand his despair (31). But whenever he achieves intimacy with María, he has to distance himself by quarreling with her, doubting her, and verbally and physically abusing her. He needs to feel that she exists for him alone (55), but María is a married woman, and he suspects her of having an affair with her cousin Hunter as well. There is a "wall of glass" between them, an ultimate lack of communication caused in part by the mystery that surrounds her and his insecurity about their relationship. He is consumed by doubts about the sincerity of her

feelings for him and tortures her with questions about the other men, real and imagined, in her life. He never relates consciously to her as an independent individual, apart from himself, and torn between love and hatred for her, he destroys their relationship with cruelty and brutality, twisting her words in jealous arguments and humiliating her. He wants to possess and isolate her, thinking that she is essential for him in something he has to do (32). She seems to offer a link, a bridge to an understanding of himself; but it is precisely this connection that he destroys by killing her in jealous rage, and he remains lost in the "dark labyrinth" (31) of his mind. Nevertheless, he is aware of the split in his consciousness (76), the fragmentation of the self. The thought of losing María leads him to consider suicide (80). Later, during a shared moment of beauty by the sea, he considers a double death. Tempted by the vertigo of the cliff, he wants to drag María with him into the abyss (102) that corresponds physically to the "black chasm" inside of him, that emptiness he feels in his jail cell at the end (137), after he has destroyed his painting and killed María.

For Castel, the symbol of transformation is a bird. In an anxious dream he has as a result of his cruelty to María in a quarrel, he experiences metamorphosis into a man-sized bird (more like a rooster than a phoenix!) and realizes that he is losing his humanity. According to Erich Neumann, birds in mythology are sacred to the Great Mother (76) and symbolize her presence. The dream signals psychic danger with its regressive imagery. The abyss, the sea, the house, are other visual representations connected with this archetype (14). In another dream, Castel associates the house image with María, though it is a house he desired since childhood that he can enter only with the guidance of "old memories" (Sábato 52). The abyss and the sea on Allende's estate beckon him to a love/death with María, his mistress, but also the archetypal mother. The composition of his painting connects the image of the lonely woman by the sea with "Motherhood." Like Cardillac and Jame Gumb, Castel has an idealized image of his mother and is dominated by the memory of her (4). For this reason, he cannot accomplish separation from her, remaining in an infantile state of ego consciousness and dependent on María, unable to grant her freedom and independence and terrified of losing her. Losing her would mean losing part of himself. Not having integrated the feminine within his personality, he is dependent on woman and gains his autonomy only by destroying her. Consequently, he becomes aware of his inner emptiness that is similar to "the total lack" of Jame Gumb (Harris 172).

The symbol for metamorphosis in Jame Gumb's case is the chrysalis (term from Harris 204), the golden-hued cocoon of the deathhead moth, representative of his failure to achieve individuation and with it, maturation. All the artists and artisans in the works examined fail in the process of transformation because they cannot achieve wholeness of the self, which depends on the relationship of male and female, the internalization of these polarities in the psyche and their resolution within the personality of the individual (Singer 1). In the alchemical labora-

tory, analogous to the human psyche, base metals are transformed into gold, the symbol of the self, in a mysterious process of transmutation that represents a spiritual reality or an inner process of perfection. For Cardillac, however, gold is connected with aesthetic illusion and evil, a deceptive sublimity, and every artifact he creates is regained at the expense of life in his striving for perfection in his art. Loder is ostentatious about his wealth, casting statues in bronze and silver. His creations have a golden hue and are large and deceptively lifelike. One of the members of the Egotists Club in London refers to them as "chryselephantine stuff" (Sayers 3). Like Cardillac, he is a perfectionist. His mistress and model, Mariá, was "absolutely perfect from the sculptor's point of view" (5). Her only imperfection reveals the work of art not to be a representation or illusion, but perfect in its identity of life and art. Mariá Morano *is* the statue, though this identity brings her death. In a reversal of Romantic irony that destroys form for the sake of delimitation and the recipient's participation in the eternal flux of vital energy, both Cardillac and Loder create artifacts that reify life and spirit in form. Instead of destroying art for the sake of life, they destroy life for the sake of art. Their creations are attained by acts of murder to be taken literally on the level of the murder mystery, but metaphorically in terms of the artistic process involved, since form cannot but fixate life.

NOTES

1. Johannes Cremerius has edited a volume of psychoanalytic biographies that includes profiles of artists like George Sand, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Goethe in *Neurose und Genialität* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1971). It includes a bibliography of international psychoanalytic-biographic publications from 1907 to 1960 about writers, painters and sculptors, politicians, founders of religion and saints, as well as scientists (275-289). There is also a brief index of the most important theoretical writings regarding psychoanalytic biography (291-292).

2. Reinhold Wolff's *Psychoanalytische Literaturkritik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975) includes an article on aesthetics and the psychology of the artist by Otto Rank and Hanns Sachs and an analysis of Stendhal by E. Bergler; Alexander Mitscherlich has edited a volume, *Psycho-Pathographien I. Schriftsteller und Psychoanalyse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972) with contributions dealing with Strindberg, Balzac, Conrad, Ferdinand Meyer, Thomas Mann, Nabokov, Kierkegaard, and Flaubert.

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